

The Garden Path

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PLANT OF THE MONTH By Marty Finkel

Trilliums in the Piedmont

Four trilliums can be found in bloom in deciduous woods in the Piedmont of NC in the month of May, and it is always a delightful surprise when you find one or more. They all grow in part to full shade and are perennial. **No trilliums should be removed from their native sites.** Some are nursery propagated and can be purchased from reputable nurseries.

- *Trillium recurvatum* has several common names, among them prairie trillium, toadshade, and bloody noses. The flowers are maroon and bloom March through May. The plants are 12 - 18" tall with an 8 - 12" spread, and they are rhizomatous. They are difficult to propagate from seed, but they spread very gradually if left undisturbed. They can be found in the mountains as well.
- *Trillium pusillum*, also known as Carolina least trillium and dwarf wake Robin, has a white flower that ages to pink or purple. It is 6 - 12" tall and wide, forms colonies and is a fast grower.
- *Trillium grandiflorum* goes by the common name of large-flowered trillium or wood lily. It grows 12 - 18" tall with an 8 - 12" spread, and its flower is white aging to pink. It is rhizomatous and difficult to propagate from seed; in its natural habitat, seeds are disburshed by ants.
- *Trillium catesbaei*, or Catesby's trillium, blooms March through June in the mountains and in the Piedmont. Its flowers start out pink, and they are always "reflexed" below the leaves. They can be found in dry oak and oak-pine woods. Catesby's trillium is often confused with the large-flowered trillium, but with practice, they can easily be correctly identified.



Trillium recurvatum



T. pusillum



T. grandiflorum



T. catesbaei

Photos used with permission. Credits: *T. recurvatum* by Tom Harville, *T. pusillum* by Dr. Bobby J. Ward, *T. grandiflorum* and *T. catesbaei* by Mark Rose. These photos and from the NC Native Plant Society website.

CHECKLIST By Mary Jane Bosworth

Now is the time I enjoy my garden the most. Weather is pleasant and perennials are popping up all over the place. The greens are really green and everything is healthy looking. Most of my garden work occurs at this time of the year as well. After spreading 8 yards of mulch, we decided we needed another 8 yards. Hopefully, this mulch will help keep weeds down this summer and control moisture levels. Here are some other jobs that need doing.....

- ✓ Now is the time to ease tropicals' back into the garden from the house.
- ✓ Consider fencing and repellents to discourage critters (deer, squirrels, rabbits and even friendly dogs) from damaging all your hard work and beautiful landscaping.
- ✓ Fertilize spring flowering shrubs and trees after their flowers fade.
- ✓ Consider investing in an irrigation system to make maintenance easier, whether you go whole hog and hire someone to install an irrigation system or just use soaker hoses and timers. Either will conserve water and make the task of watering easier than dragging hoses all around the yard.
- ✓ Pre-emergent herbicides applied now will prevent weeds from developing. Don't use them in areas you plan to seed.
- ✓ Fast climbing clematis should be pruned and trained.
- ✓ Don't be in a hurry to pull out plants that look like they have suffered frost damage. Leave them for a few months, they may come back.
- ✓ Pinch off faded flowers of annuals to encourage side branching and more blooms.
- ✓ Frost sensitive bedding plants can safely be planted the first week in May.
- ✓ Cannas should be divided every 3-4 years to encourage flowering.
- ✓ Hang up hummingbird feeders.

GARDENING ON THE WEB By Carl Shafer

This column is intended to guide readers to many sites of useful and interesting gardening information. Today's column will concentrate on NC Extension sources. I have found a convenient starting point to be *Lawn and Garden Publications*. www.ces.ncsu.edu/lawn-and-garden-publications/ In the *General Resources* section you will find *Central North Carolina Planting Calendar for Annual Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs* and *NC Agriculture Chemical Manual*. Also in this section you will find *Gardening Website* which takes you to <http://gardening.ces.ncsu.edu>. We will look at this in some detail next time. The additional nine sections go from Flowers to Wildlife. You can go directly to a section by clicking on it or you can scroll from one end to the other if you are just checking it out.

THE TYROS' CORNER By Eileen Novak

You know, there are times when I think someone should just sit down with Mother Nature and discuss the calendar and seasons, and what season should fall within which month. Having to contend with summer temps in January isn't such a chore but it seriously confuses the plants. If we were to just propose to Mother Nature that if she wants to control the weather, she should just publish the appropriate calendars and we'll tell the plants when to start budding, leafing out, blooming, etc. Odds are, she will find it such a chore that she will give up and go back to putting winter in January and not bringing out a night or two in April. Yeah, right!

I surveyed my gardens after the last 2 late freezes and I have formulated a theory about what plants are most likely to incur damage. Here it is: The price you paid for any given plant, the amount of sentimental feeling you have toward any given plant is in direct proportion to the amount of damage it will incur. Conversely, the more you want to get rid of something, the less the frost will affect it.

Here are my substantiating facts: The lovely purple-flowering, topiaried crepe myrtles that I paid a LOT for at the local nursery had all the brand new leaves that were peeping out frizzled to black crisps. The 2 other

crepe myrtles that I got for free at a Franklin County tree give-away didn't even notice the cold. The pomegranate bush that had belonged to my daughter was frosted into oblivion. The multiple Chinese privet seedlings that pop up everywhere are untouched.

The Kiwi bush that I have been nursing for 4 years and was just about to begin flowering and fruiting (planted against the recommendation of the Extension Center pamphlet) might just be DOA. The butterfly bushes that I regret putting out are fine and dandy.

And the strawberries that are going to produce WAY too much fruit again were completely unfazed by the frost events.

It's not just me, folks, a friend of mine who very much wanted to keep his mint had it blasted by Jack Frost. Mine is still going strong (anybody want some?)

So my take-away from this is: if you pay for something, act like you want to keep it by covering it somehow when the weatherman tells you about frost events. Now, I'll bet that the veteran Master Gardeners out there are all muttering things to themselves. They are probably saying "they wouldn't announce this stuff on radio, TV and the papers if you weren't supposed to DO something. I'm not writing for them, they know this stuff. I am trying to help all the other tyros out there. Remember, new gardeners, that you should learn from the mistakes of others: you don't have time to make them all yourselves!

INTERESTING TID-BITS By Marty Finkel

- Driving to the beach this summer, you might be wondering what the fields and fields of flowers are that you see in Bertie, Chowan, Edgecombe, Hertford, Martin, and Washington counties. It's clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*), an extremely economically important crop -- it produces sclareolide which is used to make fragrances last longer in hundreds of fragranced household products from soap to fabric softeners to detergents to fine perfumes and colognes. Avoca, Inc., located in Merry Hill in Bertie County, is the world's No. 1 manufacturer and supplier of sclareolide to the fragrance industry, and northeastern NC is the unofficial sage-growing capital of the world. In this area, around 120 farmers plant and harvest it on 14,000 acres for Avoco, Inc., which exports 100% of the sclareolide produced to European fragrance companies. These companies sell their fragrances to U.S. manufacturers.

The Parrish family of Chowan County grows 400 acres of clary sage, planting from August to around Labor Day. They use seed treatments to lessen damage from insects during the growing season. The plants get about one foot tall before winter when they go dormant until it warms up in March. During growth, the plants are fertilized and they are sprayed and cultivated between rows for weed control, producing 3 to 6 feet tall plants with lavender, pink, or white blooms by May. Mike Parrish, the fourth generation of his family to grow sage (in addition to peanuts, cotton, soybeans, and wheat), says that it's probably the most stable crop they grow, having held its value for nearly 15 years.

(Information for this tidbit found in Spring 2016 issue of "North Carolina Field and Family")

- Are you ready for a "true blue" rose? This has been the goal of plant breeders for untold years, and in 2011, the Suntory Company introduced 'Applause' to North America. It was touted as the first truly blue rose, but it doesn't look much bluer to most people than the "blue" roses already in the trade. In an article "Plant Palette: Blue Roses" in the 2-11-12 issue of the *Herald & Review* Jennifer Schultz Nelson, a unit educator in horticulture for the University of Illinois Extension, reported on this break-through. The pigment delphinidin must be present in order for a flower to appear blue, and roses don't naturally make it. However, after 14 years of genetic research, the Suntory scientists were successful in inserting this pigment into a rose's genome. Once the gene is present, the environment inside the plant cell must maintain a certain level of acidity for the delphinidin to appear blue. Even with the acidity and the delphinidin pigment, there is another hurdle to overcome: the rose still makes the red pigment. So the scientists have supplied this rose with the genetic ability to suppress the red pigment -- but not all the way, thus the still-purplish color of 'Applause.' The really important thing about the new blue rose may be that with the genetic alterations made so far and promise for the future, many different colors may be possible -- including true blue! By the way, 'Applause' was selling for \$25 - \$35/stem ...

- We have already experienced the bullet-shaped dessert-quality seedless grape “Lady’s Fingers” in our local supermarkets. Now meet an even larger new dessert quality, seedless, elongated black table grape variety called “Witch Fingers,” developed in a cooperative grape endeavor in 2002 between the University of Arkansas and International Fruit Genetics (IFG), a private breeder based in Bakersfield, California. According to an article by magnoliareport.com in 2011 and republished on 10-14-15, “...the grapes have created a buzz among foodies. Chefs are talking about them. Retail analysts are writing about them and New York City’s “Village Voice” blogged about them” They were reported as selling for \$7 a pound.

Dr. John Clark, Professor at University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, says there are reasons for this university/industry alliance. One is to “... generate revenue in a program that had no industry financial support,” and “... UA has created the most advanced quality in a flavored grape ever achieved, but still these achievements do not meet up with the big table grape world ... this is a key way to potentially get the U of A achievements into the mainstream table grape world.”

The U of A grape A-2409 was sent to IFG for breeding use in 2002, where it was crossed with another public variety. The first fruit was produced in 2004, and from a consumer test batch, Jim Beagle, a developer, grower and co-owner of Grapery, found consumer interest and excitement so high that they decided to release Witch Fingers in 2010. In 2013 more of this variety was grown for retail sales. “The elongation breeding done at UA is the key to the Witch Finger development,” Clark said.

For further reading on breeding: www.uaex.edu <http://aes.uark.edu>

More information at: www.internationalfruitgenetics.com and www.grapery.biz

HERB OF THE MONTH By Edna Gaston

Echinacea purpurea

Height: 1 to 2’

Flowers: purple, blooming mid to late summer but new cultivars are in other colors

Propagation: seeds after temperatures are in the 70’s

Growing conditions: sun to light shade, grows well in hot, humid zones and needs very little supplemental watering

HISTORY: Echinacea (or Purple Coneflower) has long history of use by Native Americans. It originated in North America but is greatly appreciated in European gardens today.

USES: Native Americans would rub the juice of this plant on feet or hands, believing it would lessen the effects of walking on hot coals but I am definitely not recommending this practice. Today it is used as a highly desirable ornamental.

SEEDS: Seeds need to be stratified for about four weeks. Sow uncovered in a good growing medium. Germination is slow

GROWING: While nothing is truly carefree, echinaceas are close. Once established they are quite hardy, withstanding periods of drought. Average garden soil is just fine. Staking is usually not necessary. Just plant, sit back and enjoy!

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